

A ROSE AMONG THE THORNS

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Jong receiving her paratrooper wing from Sabtu during the VAT69 Commando paratroopers passing out parade ceremony at General Operations Forces camp in Ulu Kinta near Ipoh.

HER love for taking on challenging activities pushed Insp Jong Pit Cheong into going for the VAT69 commando basic parachute training.

She was the only female among 31 VAT69 commandos to take on the month-long training.

“Before joining the training session, I did not have any knowledge about parachuting. I just thought about enhancing my capabilities.

“To be honest, I’m scared of heights but I wanted to challenge myself.

“At the same time, when I reported for duty, the chief commander told me to train as a parachutist,” she told *MetroPerak*.

Hailing from Kampung Semere, Samarahan in Sarawak, the 29-year-old is an Economics graduate from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) and the fourth child out of five siblings.

She was selected to join the VAT69 on May 4 this year and one week into her training, she contemplated quitting.

“It was very tough because I was always tired, stressed and couldn’t follow the teaching. But because my friends and the coaches encouraged and also pushed me, I decided to go on with the training,” she said.

Somehow, her interest in parachuting grew despite her fear of heights.

“The fear is something that I can’t overcome but for my country, I will do anything.

“Even though I was the only girl in the training, through teamwork, I could train as usual because everyone is treated equal here.

Jong said self-preparation is vital when it comes to VAT69 training and she knows that she will be the one to reinvigorate the women parachute team in the police force.

“To prepare myself, I go jogging every day and I make sure I’m physically fit for the task,” she added.

Jong said she was accustomed to life in Ulu Kinta but needs more time to know more people here. She said she is looking forward to more parachute training in the future.

Bukit Aman Internal Security and Public Order director Datuk Seri Muhammad Sabtu Osman, who gave certificates to the trainees on the last day of the training session, hopes to see more female paratroopers in the near future.

Jong had to undergo six dives from 1,200 feet for a month to be awarded the parachute badge.

“I do hope she will inspire more women to take up parachuting and also be a part of the VAT69 commandos,” said Sabtu.

Sabtu said in the past, there were eight women parachutists but they were assigned to do administrative work.

“With Jong, I hope we can actually build a formidable female squad. She will be the pioneer female parachutist.”